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SUBJECT: UAE RELIGIOUS ADVISOR DEFENDS ISLAM AND CALLS FOR
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

REF: ABU DHABI 2127

¶1. (U) On May 23, Sheikh Sayyed Ali al-Hashimi, the Judicial and Religious Affairs Advisor to UAE Presidential Court, paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador following attendance at a reception hosted by al-Hashimi the previous night in honor of a delegation from the Washington-based Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR).

¶2. (SBU) Al-Hashimi spoke about the tolerant nature of Islam as a religion, and the explicit call for tolerance and cooperation in the Qu'ran. He explained that although Islam originated in the Arab world, and that the majority of Arab Muslims are a tolerant people, as Islam spread throughout the non-Arab world the cultures of many other countries were superimposed on Islam. As a result, today there are many non-Qu'ranic religious practices including fundamentalist extremism which profess to be part of Islam, but which stem from cultural practices and the mixture of foreign philosophies with Islam, or (in the case of Islamic Extremism) arise from personal reasons and political dissatisfaction.

¶3. (SBU) Al-Hashimi stated that religious leaders should not overly concentrate on these foreign philosophies and practices, noting that the purpose of the Prophet Mohammed's messages has always been to help develop and improve individual human beings. He emphasized that Islam teaches us to focus on the development of the individual and his/her humanity, stating that the "best of God's children are those that are kind to their brothers."

¶4. (SBU) Al-Hashimi stated that while Islam as a religion does not have anything against Judaism, recognizing it as an inspired "religion of the book," Muslims throughout the world have come to associate Judaism and Jews with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and suffering among the Arab, principally Muslim, population. As a result, religious tolerance has declined in the region because political problems have become mingled with religious identities. Al-Hashimi called on President Bush to reactivate the Middle East Roadmap and to moderate the issues between the two opposed parties, explicitly endorsing a two-state solution.

¶5. (SBU) Responding to an invitation from the Ambassador, al-Hashimi welcomed the opportunity to make a visit to the United States, stating that it would be possible for him to do so at any convenient time, even during Ramadan. He asked the Embassy's assistance and cooperation in arranging such a visit. Note: The Embassy will follow-up in the coming months with NEA/PD and the desk to program a visit for Sheikh Ali al-Hashimi, perhaps a VOLVIS program in conjunction with a visit sponsored by CAIR. End Note.

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